

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7094

INFO AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG

SUBJ: PM'S COMMENTS ON OIL AND GAS DISCOVERY IN GULF OF THAILAND

REF : A. STATE 187474

B. BANGKOK 14813

1. DURING HIS NORMAL WEEKLY NEWS CONFERENCE ON SEPT. 19, PM THANOM COMMENTED ON DISCOVERY OF OIL AND GAS IN GULF OF THAILAND. IN MANNER THAT LED TO SPECULATION BY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICES THAT THAILAND HAD MADE MAJOR COMMERCIAL DISCOVERY. FULL TRANSLATION OF PM'S REMARKS MAKE EVIDENT THEY WERE REPORTED INACCURATELY AND OUT OF CONTEXT (REFTEL B). VERBATIM TEXT FOLLOWS:

THANOM: I RECEIVED A MOST SATISFACTORY REPORT ON OIL FROM OFFICIALS CONCERNED. OUT OF SEVEN WELLS DUG, OIL WAS FOUND IN ONE WELL, LIQUID GAS IN ANOTHER. NORMALLY YIELDS OF 1000 BARRELS A DAY ARE CONSIDERED VERY SATISFACTORY; HOWEVER EXPERTS BELIEVE THAT SEVERAL OF OUR WELLS WILL PRODUCE 2000 BARRELS PER DAY PER WELL. THIS STRIKE WAS UNCLASSIFIED

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MAKDE DEEP IN THE GULF OF THAILAND, OFF THE COAST OF SURAT

THANI PROVINCE BY TWO FIRMS, TEXACO AND UNION OIL COMPANY.

REPORTER: THE WELLS YIELD 2000 BARRELS PER DAY, BUT HOW LONG WILL THIS CONTINUE?

THANOM: WE MUST WAIT AND SEE BECAUSE THIS IS THE START ONLY. MANY MORE WELLS MUST BE DUG AFTER THIS FIRST WELL. THESE WELLS MAY OR MAY NOT YIELD 2000 BARRELS PER DAY. IF MANY WELLS ARE DUG IN ONE LOCATION, THEY COULD YIELD SEVERAL THOUSAND BARRELS PER DAY. THE THREE OIL REFINERIES IN OUR COUNTRY REQUIRE ABOUT 160,000 BARRELS OF CRUDE OIL PER DAY. IF SEVERAL COMPANIES DRILL WELLS AND EACH COMPANY DISCOVERS OIL, WE CAN EXPECT THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE DRILLING IN SEARCH OF OIL. ANYONE WHO HAS GONE TO AMERICA MAY HAVE SEEN THAT THERE ARE A HUGE NUMBER OF OIL RIGS BY THE SIDES OF ROADS NEAR LOS ANGELES. IN SEVERAL LOCATIONS, THE TOTAL PRODUCTION OF ALL WELLS, EXPERTS THINK, WILL PROBABLY BE AT LEAST 50,000 BARRELS A DAY.

REPORTER: DOES THAT MEAN IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY AT THIS STAGE HOW LARGE THE DEPOSITS ARE?

THANOM: YES, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW AT THIS STAGE. THOSE STRIKES WERE MADE IN THE GULF AT A DEPTH OF 18,000 FT. JUST THINK NOW DEEP THE HOLES HAD TO BE DUG, ALMOST SIX KILOMETERS, AND HOW POWERFUL THE EQUIPMENT HAD TO BE*

REPORTER: WHO DISCOVERED OIL AND WHO DISCOVERED GAS?

THANOM : ONE COMPANY DISCOVERED LIQUID GAS AND ANOTHER COMPANY DISCOVERED CRUDE OIL. THIS GAS WILL BE MOST USEFUL BECAUSE WE ARE USING GAS INSTEAD OF CHARCOAL FOR COOKING TO A LARGE EXTENT NOW.

REPORTER: WHEN WERE THESE STRIKES MADE?

THANOM: VERY RECENTLY. SAMPLES OF THE OIL WERE BROUGHT AND SHOWN TO ME YESTERDAY. THE COMPANIES ARE STILL CONTINUING TO EXPLORE.

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REPORTER: WHAT DOES THE OIL LOOK LIKE?

THANOM: IT IS VERY CLEAR, UNLIKE OIL FROM THE CHAI PRAKARN OIL DEPOSITS (IN FANG, CHIANG MAI PROVINCE).

COMMENT: SOURCES AT RTG MINERAL RESOURCES DEPT. AND OIL COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES AGREE THAT DURING HIS NEWS CONFERENCE THANOM REPORTED REASONABLY ACCURATELY THE PRESENT

STATUS OF OIL EXPLORATION IN THE GULF OF THAILAND, I.E.,
OIL AND GAS HAS BEEN DISCOVERED, BUT IT IS TOO EARLY TO
SAY WHETHER OR NOT THE DISCOVERY IS IN COMMERCIAL
QUANTITIES.
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